

October 17th, 2020

Judge Talwani

Re: Jorge Salcedo

Dear Judge Talwani,

My name is Erik Holt, I am currently 24 years old and playing professional soccer in Salt Lake City, Utah. Over the summer, I am proud to have completed my degree in Political Science from UCLA, as I am the first in my family to do so. I played collegiate soccer from 2015-2018 under coach Salcedo and I would love to take this time to address the affect and influence my coach brought to my life.

I was first verbally committed to the University of San Diego, a school that I grew up just five miles from, a school that I had always wanted to go to. I was offered a fully scholarship to this beautiful school and felt as if I was on top of the world with this offer. Jorge and his UCLA coaching staff reached out to me and asked if I could make the quick trip to Westwood to visit the UCLA before officially deciding to go with USD. I took the drive up to UCLA and was blown away. Every aspect of this University was for superior to USD's, with all due respect. I remember walking into Jorge's office. The first thing I noticed were the vast amount of professional soccer players' who came through this University as a by-product of the coaching and development here. When I talked face to face with Jorge for the first time, he had an incredible way of telling stories and bringing his past experiences both as a player and a coach to life. As we discussed his former success as a player, as well as the development of the players within the program, Jorge made me truly believe that UCLA was by far, the best University in the country not only for winning and becoming a professional athlete someday, but also a place that would reinforce great values and ethics into my life. Out of the dozen offers I had, UCLA was the only place that was unable to give

me a full scholarship – I decided to take a scholarship that was around 50% with financial aid and bet on myself in order to fulfill my goal of becoming a professional athlete.

As a professional soccer player now, Jorge held the UCLA soccer team to a very professional level. The quality of what we did and how we did things at this program were much different than that of any other program that I was witnessing. One thing I loved about Jorge was his willingness to do whatever it takes to win. Our preparation as athletes were driven through his relentless approach of fulfilling our full potential. This is something I want to highlight more than anything. If there were a few words to describe Jorge and what he brought into my life from UCLA, it was the constant effort put forth by him to enable players to “fulfill their full potential”. This is the reason I became a professional athlete. This is the reason I became the captain of the men’s soccer team my Junior and Senior year. This has led me to win a Championship in my first year as a professional athlete in 2019. Everything we did on and off the field was a reflection of Jorge’s vision of everyone fulfilling their full potential.

While you’re a student-athlete, everything is 100 mph. You are constantly going from class to class after going through relentless workouts on the field and in the gym, trying to find time to eat and sleep, trying to study, and at the end of the day, trying to perform at the highest of levels. Jorge was always great at making the team feel like a family, he did this by inviting the group over to his house where we would have family meals. If anything, it was a great opportunity for the group to come together and have a good time. Jorge’s family was always so supportive of UCLA and would do anything to ensure that everyone felt that they were part of the UCLA family. Jorge absolutely loved UCLA. Whenever I thought about the UCLA Men’s soccer program, I could only think of one person - Jorge. He has UCLA in his blood. When we lost, it almost felt that he was out there as a player and took it so personally like we did. To me, this was another lesson I learned

from him. That love, passion and drive that Jorge brought everyday was something that I wanted to bring into my life and into my future endeavors. I grew to understand that the passion you do something at not only reflects you as a person but also reflects your true happiness within yourself. Jorge taught me that when you find something you love, give everything you have and much more because you never know when it would be taken away from you. I know he would give anything to be a player at UCLA or professional just one more time.

Jorge's character as a man was always reflected in his relationships with his players. As I said before, Jorge ran the UCLA men's soccer team very professionally. Coach treated players as young professionals, while holding them to standards well above collegiate standards. My relationship with Jorge was at times a roller coaster and I will try and summarize it as best as possible over my time with UCLA.

After coming from the number 1 team in the nation my senior year, a team I was captain of and best player, I came to UCLA where I had to start at the bottom, where every guy was a captain from their previous teams, now all competing amongst one another. My team consisted of around 12 seniors, with older classman in the positions that I played in. I didn't start my freshman year and I was pissed. I made it a point that every training session I would make Jorge and the coaching staff be so hesitant to play the older guys because I was dominating practices. That's exactly what I had to prove and by the end of the season, our team had a disappointing season in which we lost in the second round of playoffs; however, I proved to them that I could be a player to count on for the next season, as I started around 8 games towards the end of the year. Slowly my relationship began to change with Jorge. He realized that my work ethic was unstoppable. He realized he could count on me. I started every game my Second year and began to take great strides as a leader. Then my Junior year came. At this point, Jorge gave me the captain arm band and

allowed me to lead the group. Our relationship grew as he now trusted me completely. I became a better leader, player, and overall person because Jorge guided me through this process. He taught me how to be a leader on the field and off the field, he gave me advice in my personal relationships and I could honestly say he became a father figure in my life. Within a blink of an eye, my senior year was here and gone and I was preparing for my jump to professional soccer. Although it is difficult to put into words my relationship with Jorge, he truly was a father figure to me. At UCLA, he created such a professional environment within the culture of UCLA Men's soccer that enabled so many people to be successful. I referenced my relationship with him. Jorge, in my opinion, respected players who not only worked hard, but players who went through the process at UCLA and became better players and people due to their relentless willingness to fulfill their own potential. The "process" was important to Jorge, how people did things was important and to me, this is what separated UCLA from any other place. I grew to love UCLA, the men's soccer program and the people I worked with because of the passion that Jorge cultivated while being the head coach. I couldn't be the person I am today without my experiences he brought into my life and shared with me.

At the end of the day, I could talk about many more experiences I had with Jorge but to me what's important is some of the thoughts I shared above. Jorge to me, gave so much to UCLA soccer. In the span of my time at UCLA, he developed well over 30 professional soccer players in just my 4 years alone. His willingness to help individuals achieve their full-potential both on and off the field has led to some many peoples' successes. I feel like I owe Jorge and UCLA for everything they were able to give me. I will always stand beside Jorge as he has always pushed me to become the best version of myself. His character as a man has always been straightforward and honest with me about all my life endeavors and I am proud to call him my friend.